

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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R 031300Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0435

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 9097

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, ET

SUBJECT: DISTURBANCES AND DISSIDENCE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

REFS: A. ADDIS ABABA 6423 (DTG 271444Z MAY 76) B. ADDIS ABABA

7195 (DTG 151417Z JUN 76) NOTAL C. ADDIS ABABA 7356 (DTG

180902Z JUN 76) NOTAL D. ADDIS ABABA 7884 (DTG 011306Z

JUN 76) NOTAL E. ADDIS ABABA 8211 (DTG 091337Z JUL 76)

NOTAL F. ADDIS ABABA 8633 (DTG 201304Z JUL 76) NOTAL

1. REF A SUMARIZED UPCOUNTRY DISTURBANCES BY PROVINCES AS OF MAY, 1976. THIS CABLE REPORTS RURAL DISTURBANCES OCCURRING DURING JUNE AND JULY OF THIS YEAR, SOME OF WHICH ARE CONTINUING. THE SITUATION BY PROVINCE IS AS FOLLOWS.

A) ERITREA-EPMG INITIATIVE TO SOLVE ERITREAN CONFLICT APPEARS TO HAVE MET WITH LITTLE OR NO SUCCESS. UNREST AMONG GOVERNMENT FORCES THERE HAS INCREASED, IN PART PROBABLY OWING TO THE EXECUTIONS OF MILITARY OFFICERS INCLUDING BG GETACHEW NADEW, BY THE EPMG. BOTH CONGEN AND EMBASSY HAVE REPORTED
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THAT EPMG IS RESPONSIBLE FOR RADIO ASMARA BEING OFF THE AIR

FOR FEAR THAT STATION MIGHT BE TAKEN OVER BY DISSIDENT SECOND DIVISION TROOPS TO BROADCAST ANTI-DIRG PROPAGANDA. THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE THAT ERITREAN INSURGENTS HAVE MADE LARGE-SCALE ATTACKS ON EPMG FORCES WHICH WOULD BE A SIGNIFICANT DEPARTURE FROM THEIR EARLIER SMALL-UNIT ATTACKS AND SIGNAL A NEW PHASE IN THE FIGHTING. EPMG CASUALTIES, ACCORDING TO OUR INFORMANTS, HAVE SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASED OF LATE AS PRESUMABLY HAVE THE INSURGENTS.

B) TIGRE-REF C REPORTED INCREASED INSURGENCY IN TIGRE PROVINCE MOST OF WHICH IS ATTRIBUTED TO ETHIOPIAN PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (EPRP)/TIGRE LIBERATION FRONT (TLF) WHICH HAS APPARENTLY COORDINATED SOME OF ITS ACTIONS WITH THE PLF. IN ADDITION TO DESTROYING BRIDGES AND AMBUSHING GOVERNMENT VEHICLES, WE HAVE HEARD THAT INSURGENTS HAVE CONDUCTED AT LEAST TWO LARGE-SCALE ACTIONS AGAINST GOVERNMENT REGULARS NEAR ENTICCIO AND NORTH OF ADIGRAT. GOVERNMENT FORCES SUFFERED HEAVY CASUALTIES IN BOTH OPERATIONS. FURTHER, GOOD SOURCE TELLS US THAT THREE BUSLOADS OF FLAME UNIT TROOPS BEING TRANSPORTED TO ERITREA WERE "ANNIHILATED" BETWEEN MEKELLE AND ADIGRAT RECENTLY. GOVERNMENT PRESS OF JULY 28 REPORTS THAT 12 OUTLAWS (SHIFTAS) WERE KILLED AND 21 CAPTURED IN SHIRE AWRAJA OF TIGRE; JULY 30 PRESS REPORTS THREE MORE SHIFTAS CAPTURED IN SHIRE.

C) BEGEMDIR-EMBASSY HAS LITTLE RECENT INFORMATION FROM THIS PROVINCE EXCEPT FROM SOURCE WHO RECENTLY SPENT ONE MONTH IN DEBRE TABOR. HE INFORMS US THAT THIS AWRAJA CAPITAL WAS PREVIOUSLY "CAPTURED" BY INSURGENTS LED BY ADMASSU BELAY. INSURGENTS ROBBED AND LOOTED ALL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS EXCEPT ONE AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION OFFICE AND THEN RETURNED TO THE COUNTRYSIDE. THIS SOURCE REPORTS THAT NONE OF THE MAIN INSURGENT LEADERS, VIZ. BITWODED ADANE MAKONNEN, FITWARARI TAYE GOLLA, ATENA WASE AND ADMASSU BELAY HAS BEEN CAPTURED. ETHIOPIAN PRESS OF JULY 8 REPORTED 6 SHIFTAS CAPTURED IN CHILGA DISTRICT; JULY 21ST PRESS REPORTED 91 SHIFTAS CAPTURED IN CHILGA; JULY 23RD PRESS REPORTED 128 SHIFTAS CAPTURED IN KEMKEM KARODA DISTRICT.

D) WOLLO-CENTRAL GOVERNMENT HAS APPARENTLY ARMED TOWNSPEOPLE OF ALI WUHO 40 KILOMETERS SOUTHEAST OF BATI IN EXPECTATION OF ATTACK BY ALI MIRAH'S AFAR LIBERATION FRONT (ALF). THE GOVERNOR OF SHIFFRA, 100 KILOMETERS EAST OF DESSIE AND 60
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KILOMETERS NORTH OF BATI-MILLE RD, HAS REQUESTED MILITARY GUARD BECAUSE OF FEARS OF ALF ATTACK. AFAR INSURGENTS, ARMED WITH AK 47'S, HAVE REPORTEDLY BEEN SIGHTED IN THAT AREA. MEMBERS OF THE AFAR AND ISSA TRIBES REPORTEDLY CLASHED 2 WEEKS AGO IN WERANSO BETWEEN MILLE AND BATI. FURTHER WEST IN WOLLO, FEUDALIST INSURGENTS LED BY DEJ. BERHANE-MESKEL DESTA AND KEGN. ABRAHA KASSA CONTINUE THEIR ANTI-GOVERNMENT FORAYS (REF E) IN COOPERATION WITH EPRP. TOWN OF WOLDIYA WAS REPORTEDLY EVACUATED

FOR A SECOND TIME IN JUNE BECAUSE OF REPORTS THAT SHIFTAS WERE ABOUT TO ATTACK.

E) GOJJAM- INSURGENT ACTIVITY IN GOJJAM APPEARS TO BE SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER THAN PREVIOUSLY. OUR INFORMANTS TELL US THAT THIS IS CAUSED BY GOJJAMI PERCEPTIONS THAT EPMG HAS LAUNCHED ANTI-GOJJAMI CAMPAIGN. THIS PERCEPTION IS REINFORCED BY FACT THAT 13 OUT OF 19 PERSONS EXECUTED IN ADDIS RECENTLY (ADDIS ABABA 8773, DTG 231331Z JULY 76,) INCLUDING MAJOR SISAY HABTE AND GENERAL GETACHEW NADEW, WERE GOJJAMIS. INSURGENTS HAVE REPORTEDLY BEEN STRENGTHENED BY RETURNING PEASANTS WHO RETAINED ARMS AND AMMUNITION GIVEN THEM FOR "RED MARCH". LEADING SHIFTAS IN GOJJAM INCLUDE DEJ. ABETU TESFAYE, TARIKU DEMISSIE, BEKAFO HAILE-YESUS, WUBALE TEGEGNU, DAMTE BERHANU, TAYE TIRUNEH, SIMEHNAH DESTA, AND TIRFE RETA. IT IS NOT KNOWN HOW MANY MEN AND WHAT ARMS EACH OF THESE SHIFTA LEADERS CONTROLS, BUT SOME HAVE IN CONTINUED OPPOSITION TO THE DIRG ALMOST SINCE IT CAME INTO POWER. THE MOST IMPORTANT OF THESE SHIFTAS, TIRFE RETTA, PROBABLY CONTROLS A FEW THOUSAND MEN IN THE MOTA AREA AND HAS SURVIVED SEVERAL GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO ELIMINATE HIM, INCLUDING USE OF REGULAR TROOPS WITH AIR SUPPORT. SOME OF THE INSURGENT GROUPS ARE SAID TO HAVE AT LEAST A FEW AUTOMATIC WEAPONS CAPTURED FROM EPMG FORCES. PARA 4 OF REF E REPORTED 62 SHIFTAS CAPTURED IN GOJJAM. PRESS OF JULY 27 REPORTS 14 SHIFTAS CAPTURED NEAR BAHAR DAR; JULY 30 PRESS REPORTS 3 SHIFTAS KILLED AND 54 CAPTURED IN KOLA-DEGA DAMOT AND 63 OUTLAWS CAPTURED NEAR DEBRE MARKOS.

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USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 9097

F) WOLLEGA-EMBASSY HAS LITTLE INFORMATION ABOUT WOLLEGA PROVINCE BUT BELIEVES THAT THE AREA IS ESSENTIALLY PEACEFUL.

G) SHOA-ALTHOUGH SHOA WAS PREVIOUSLY QUIET, AT LEAST TWO INSURGENTS ARE CURRENTLY KNOWN TO EXIST IN THE PROVINCE. DEJ. ASRATE GETANEH REPORTEDLY HAS A SIZEABLE FOLLOWING IN THE BULGA AREA OF EASTERN SHOA, AND AT LEAST SOME OF THE MUTINEERS FROM THE AIRBORNE UNIT ARE SAID TO HAVE JOINED HIM. DEJ. KEBEDE BIZUNEH IS SAID TO HAVE A SMALL INSURGENT BAND NEAR META, 30 KILOMETERS WEST OF ADDIS ABABA. THE TOWN OF AMBO 120 KILOMETERS WEST OF ADDIS, HAS ALSO EXPERIENCED PROBLEMS WITH SHIFTAS, POSSIBLY EPRP INSPIRED. ONE SOURCE INFORMS US THAT THE AWRAJA GOVERNOR OF AMBO WAS KILLED BY INSURGENTS OR LOCAL GALLA PEASANTS DURING THE LAST WEEK OF JULY. ETHIOPIAN PRESS OF JULY 20 REPORTS THAT THE SHIFTA ALEMAYEHU WORDESSA WAS KILLED AND 7 OF HIS FOLLOWERS CAPTURED NEAR THE SHOA/WOLLO BORDER. JULY 30 PRESS REPORTS 17 SHIFTAS CAPTURED IN SHOA, EXACT AREA UNDISCLOSED.

H) HARRARGHE-EMBASSY HAS LITTLE RELIABLE INFORMATION FROM THIS PROVINCE BUT WE DO HAVE REPORTS THAT SOMALI-BACKED IN-CONFIDENTIAL

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SURGENTS CONTINUE TO INFILTRATE SOUTHERN AND WESTERN HARRARGHE. RECENT TRAVELERS TELL US THAT THE LOW ROAD BETWEEN ADDIS ABABA AND HARRAR CITY IS NO LONGER SAFE BECAUSE OF BANDIT ACTIVITY ON THAT ROAD. ADDITIONALLY, AFARS REPORTEDLY ATTACKED MAMHARAS LIVING IN AND AROUND GEWANI DURING THE MIDDLE OF JULY. REF E REPORTS THAT 19 "REACTIONARY ANARCHISTS" (EPRP) WERE RECENTLY CAPTURED IN HARRARGHE. THE EPRP IS SAID TO BE STRONG IN BOTH HARRAR AND DIRE DAWA.

I) BALE-BALE INSURGENCY IS APPARENTLY SPREADING (REFS B AND D) AND EMBASSY HAS SEVERAL REPORTS THAT 12 ETHIOPIAN ROAD AUTHORITY EMPLOYEES WERE KILLED NEAR THE TOWN OF DODOLA DURING THE MIDDLE OF JULY. PREVIOUSLY AN ARMY COLONEL AND ANOTHER OFFICER WERE AMBUSHED AND KILLED IN THIS SAME AREA. DODOLA IS LOCATED IN THE HIGHLANDS ON THE MAIN ROAD THROUGH BALE AND FAR REMOVED FROM AREA OF PREVIOUS INSURGENT ACTIVITIES. PARA 3 OF REF E REPORTS 16 SHIFTAS CAPTURED IN BALE; JULY 26TH PRESS REPORTS 10 MORE SHIFTAS CAPTURED IN THE BALE HIGHLANDS; AND JULY 27 PRESS REPORTS 20 SHIFTAS AMNESTIED IN FASIL AWRAJA OF BALE.

J) ARRUSSI-PROVINCE HAS REPORTEDLY BEEN QUIET EXCEPT THAT WE HEAR EPRP IS BECOMING STRONG IN THE CAPITAL, ASSELLA.

K) SIDAMO-SIDAMO INSURGENTS ARE ALSO BECOMING MORE AC-

TIVE (REFS A AND D). GOOD SOURCE TELLS US THAT INSURGENTS HAVE ALSO CONDUCTED FORAYS INTO THE TOWN OF KEBRE MENGIST AND THAT AREA OUTSIDE OF THAT CITY IS VIRTUALLY CONTROLLED BY SHIFTAS WHO ARE SAID TO HAVE AUTOMATIC WEAPONS. REF E REPORTS 86 SHIFTAS CAPTURED IN DEROSA AWRAJA OF SIDAMO.

L) GOFFA-THIS PROVINCE IS REPORTEDLY QUIET ALTHOUGH JULY 6TH PRESS REPORTED 8 SHIFTAS KILLED AND 11 CAPTURED NEAR ARBA MINCH.

M) KAFFA-EMBASSY HAS NO FURTHER INFORMATION ON INSURGENT GROUP LED BY FORMER KAFFA GOVERNOR (REF A) NOR HAVE WE HEARD ANYTHING FURTHER ON EFFORTS TO DISLODGE THAT INSURGENT GROUP HOLDING SHOA-GEMIRA DISTRICT. REF F REPORTED DEATH OF 7 ALLEGED EPRP MEMBERS NEAR JIMMA IN JULY.

N) ILLUBABOR-EMBASSY HAS NO INFORMATION

2. COMMENT: DURING PREVIOUS TWO-MONTH PERIOD INSURGENCIES IN BALE, SIDAMO, GOJJAM AND TIGRE HAVE INCREASED IN INTENSITY AS, TO A LESSER DEGREE, HAVE THE INSURGENCIES IN SHOA AND NORTHERN WOLLO. SURPRISINGLY, VIRTUALLY NO ONE ATTEMPTS TO CONFIDENTIAL

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ATTRIBUTE THESE INSURGENCIES TO THE ETHIOPIAN DEMOCRATIC UNION (EDU) ANYMORE. BECAUSE OF THESE INSURGENCIES AND A FEW WIDELY-BRUIED ABOUT RUMORS OF EXTORTION BY RURAL PEASANT ASSOCIATIONS, FEWER OF OUR SOURCES ARE WILLING OR ABLE TO TRAVEL IN THE COUNTRYSIDE AND CONSEQUENTLY WE HAVE LESS INFORMATION ON HAPPENINGS UPCOUNTRY. GENERAL GUIDELINES THAT EMBASSY GIVES TO WOULD-BE TRAVELERS ARE THAT WESTERN ROAD TO ASMARA IS UNSAFE NORTH OF GONDAR, AND QUESTIONABLE BETWEEN BAHAR DAR AND GONDAR. EASTERN ROAD TO ASMARA IS QUESTIONABLE NORTH OF DESSIE, AND UNSAFE BEYOND WOLDIYA. TRAVEL ON THE ASSAB ROAD BEYOND MILLE IS NOT PERMITTED EXCEPT WITH EPMG CONVOYS; LOW (SOUTH) ROAD TO HARRAR CITY IS UNSAFE AS IS THE MAIN ROAD BEYOND JIJIGA. EASTERN BRANCH OF MAIN ROAD TO KENYA (WHICH BRANCHES AT WENDO) IS UNSAFE, WHILE THE MAIN WESTERN BRANCH APPEARS QUESTIONABLE IN PLACES. SOUTHWESTERN ROADS TO JIMMA AND ARBA MINCH ARE APPARENTLY SAFE WHILE THE WESTERN ROAD TO AMBOLEKEMPTE IS QUESTIONABLE IN PARTS.. WHILE THESE NUMEROUS INSURGENCIES ARE DISRUPTING AND IRRITATING TO THE DIRG, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE ERITREAN PROBLEM, THEY DO NOT POSE A MAJOR THREAT TO THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT. NONE OF THE SHIFTA GROUPS IS ABOUT TO MARCH ON ADDIS AND MOST OF THE INSURGENT AREAS REVERT TO QUIESCENCE WHEN THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT PRESENCE IS WITHDRAWN. THE CUMULATIVE EFFECT OF THESE INSURGENCIES AND ERITREA, HOWEVER, PLACES GREAT STRAINS ON EPMG MANPOWER AND RESOURCES, AND NEGATIVELY EFFECTS MILITARY MORALE. WITH THE IMPENDING INDEPENDENCE OF DJIBOUTI, THE CONDITION OF THE ETHIOPIAN MILITARY WILL BECOME INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT. TIENKEN

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